

Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 19, Jeremiah 26-45, A Structural Overview

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his instruction on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 19, chapters 26 through 45, A Structural Overview.

We're beginning a new segment of our study of the book of Jeremiah and moving away from chapters 1 to 25 and the messages of judgment and indictment against Judah that are found there into the second section of the book that is found in chapters 26 to 45.

We notice that there is a difference between this material in that we are primarily in this section looking more at stories about Jeremiah's life and ministry and the things that take place in the last days of Judah as a nation. Chapters 1 to 25 are more of a sampling of his messages of judgment. And again, I think we possibly can connect chapters 1 to 25 with the story in Jeremiah 36, where God commands Jeremiah, after he has been preaching for 20 years, to write out on a scroll the messages that he's been preaching over the entire course of his ministry.

Jeremiah obviously cannot write down every word or give us transcripts of every sermon that he's preached, but chapters 1 to 25 are likely a reflection of what that scroll might have looked like and the messages that Jeremiah had preached. What we have in 26 to 45 are the stories and the accounts of how the people responded to that message. As Jeremiah preached these messages, what happened? What was the response to that? That begins to be fleshed out and explained for us in the second section of the book.

The focus of the book of Jeremiah is on the word of God. Some statistics that I think help reflect that. The expression, thus says the Lord, appears 155 times in the book of Jeremiah.

The expression, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah or came to me, appears 23 times. And the description of a passage or a section or an oracle as a declaration of the Lord appears 167 times. So, the word of the Lord is very important to the book of Jeremiah.

What this section is about is Judah's response to the word of the Lord. It also is going to give us, in chapters 37 to 44, more of a chronological narrative of what happens in the last days of Judah, the fall of Jerusalem in the city, and then the aftermath of that fall in chapters 40 to 44, showing us the consequences of what happened as a result of the fact that Judah did not respond to the word of God in the way that God had designed. So, the book of Jeremiah is about the word of God.

It's the story of the word of God. Remember Andrew Sheed saying that. And what happens is the word of God becomes a fire in the prophet's mouth.

The destruction that brings to those who reject the word, the tearing down, the dismantling of the nation of Judah because of their apostasy and unbelief, but then the power of the word of the Lord that is also going to rebuild and restore. Jeremiah is unique among the prophets in the sense that it gives us so many stories, narratives, and accounts of actual events from the prophet's life. We have a handful of those things in some of the other prophets, but there is no other prophetic book other than the very brief book of Jonah that focuses so much on life and the actual events that take place in the prophet's life as the book of Jeremiah.

For example, in the book of Isaiah, we have narratives from Isaiah's life that appear in chapters six to eight and chapters 36 to 39. In the book of Jeremiah, we are going to have 20 chapters that primarily are going to focus on stories from Jeremiah's life. So, I'm excited about getting into this.

There are some great stories here. My kids love stories, and I have found that even as a seminary professor, my students love stories.

And so, I think we can learn from these accounts. There's some incredible literary, rhetorical, and theological artistry in this section. This particular section of the book is important to me because a number of years ago, I wrote my dissertation on Jeremiah 26 to 45, and I will definitely resist the urge to bring my dissertation in and read parts of that, which would be even more boring than my lecture.

So, let's get into this a little bit. Jeremiah 26 to 45, thinking about it as a story, not just about Jeremiah's life, but about the word of God and how people respond to it. The purpose of this section of the book is not to give us a biography of Jeremiah's life.

It's not to tell us the story of Jeremiah per se, but it's more to provide a theological reflection on what are the consequences of the people's choices, primarily not to listen to the word of God. There's an expression that appears throughout this section of the book of Jeremiah. It's going to say again and again and repeatedly, the people did not listen or the people did not obey the message of Jeremiah.

In fact, when I wrote my dissertation, my subtitle for this section, the people have not obeyed. The Hebrew word to listen or to obey is the word *Shema*. And so the prophet is going to repeatedly say, or the narratives are going to repeatedly unfold for us, they did not listen, or they did not obey.

That expression appears in these verses. Chapter 40, verse 3. Chapter 42, verse 13 and verse 21. Chapter 43, verse 7. And then chapter 44, verses 16 and 23.

So, the expression works itself throughout. It's there in chapter 26. It's there at the end in chapter 44.

And on top of that, it is repeated again and again. The people did not listen. They did not obey.

This idea, however, is not something that's new to this. It's not something that we're just introduced to as we get to chapter 26. It is a problem that is continually and repeatedly noted in the first part of the book as well.

In studying the literary design of the book of Jeremiah, one of the things that I've noticed is that many times in the summary sections, in the prose narratives that we've looked at as sort of giving us an interpretive guide for the poetry and a summary of what Jeremiah's message was all about, that is going to be a recurring issue. The people did not listen and did not obey what the prophet had to say. And as a matter of fact, they've not been listening and they've not been obeying for a long time throughout their history before Jeremiah ever came on the scene.

In the temple sermon in Jeremiah chapter 7, this becomes the issue at the end of the message. We read in verse 23 this commandment I gave them, Obey, Shema, my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people and walk in the way that I command you that it may be well with you. But they did not obey, they did not Shema, and they did not incline their ear.

But they walked in their own counsels in the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and they went backward and not forward. From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all of my servants, the prophets, to them day after day. Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ears but stiffened their neck.

They did worse than their fathers. So, they did not obey the word of God. It's not simply a summary statement for how the people responded to the message of Jeremiah.

In many ways, it's a summary statement for the whole history of the people of Israel and Judah. Chapter 11, verses 7 to 10, again another prose sermon about the broken covenant and the covenant curses. Verse 7 says this, I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, obey my voice, Shema.

Yet they did not listen, and they did not incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore, I brought upon them all of the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not. Same thing, same wording, again in a prose section.

Chapter 19, verse 15, after Jeremiah's second visit to the potter, when he smashes the jar because things are irreparably doomed and judgment is inevitable. Here's why. Verse 15 thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I am bringing upon this city and upon all of its towns, all of the disasters that I pronounced against it because they have stiffened their neck, refusing to hear my words.

Okay? And so, chapter 25, which again is a prose section, is a summary tying together everything that we see in the first part of the book. And chapter 25, verses 3 to 9, says this: for 23 years, from the 13th year of Josiah to this very day, the word of the Lord has come to me. And I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened.

You have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear, although the Lord has persistently sent to you all of his servants, the prophets, saying, turn every one from your evil way. So, in the literary design and the rhetorical strategy of the book of Jeremiah, there is a constant emphasis on people not listening to the word of God. It's an expression that is repeated throughout the second section of the book.

That's what it's all about. But also, in the first part of the book, as we're having the actual message being preached, as there are these prose passages that want to explain for us and summarize for us what this message is all about, it comes down to constantly this same issue. They haven't listened to the word of God.

So, that's critical to the message of the book of Jeremiah. And another reflection for us is that I think the book of Jeremiah is not a book that's been haphazardly thrown together. We don't take the oracles of Jeremiah and just throw them together with the stories.

There's a rhetorical design behind all of this and an emphasis on not hearing the word of the Lord. So, that'll help you. That'll guide you to keep thinking and focus on what's this all about.

It's not a biography of Jeremiah. It's a history of the rejection of God's word. Now, there's something else that you're going to notice as you're working through this story.

It's going to present some problems as you're trying to understand this part of the book. In fact, if you pick up the book of Jeremiah and read it, I think this is going to be one of the biggest struggles. There is no real chronology in this section.

Or it seems to skip back and forth. Sometimes it's going to skip back and forth between genres. It is definitely not going to read in a linear, chronological way.

And so again, I think that reflects it's not about giving us a biography of Jeremiah's ministry from day one until the end. The story is going to be arranged in a way that's different for our reading and different for our way of understanding. But again, I think it is related to the theological message and the theological design of this section.

Okay, now let me just sort of walk through this. If I was trying to find Jeremiah, if I was trying to read Jeremiah 26-45 and pay attention to chronology, I would see something like this. In chapter 26, we have a story from the reign of Jehoiakim, 609-597, early days of his reign.

In chapters 27-29, we immediately jump forward to the reign of Zedekiah, who reigned from 597-586 BC. And they are placed side by side with each other. In chapter 30 and 31, we have poetic oracles that do not have a chronology.

And we've even left the genre of narrative. Chapters 32 and 33, we have messages and episodes of hope that are from the time of Zedekiah. And we're back into prose.

That carries over into an event from Zedekiah's life in chapter 34 that is going to focus more on judgment. But then, interestingly, as we go to chapters 35 and 36, we're back in the reign of Jehoiakim, 609-597. So, we start with Jehoiakim 26, we've got some Zedekiah materials and some poetic oracles 27-34, then 35 and 36, and we're back to Jehoiakim.

In chapters 37-44, we probably have the most chronologically ordered section of this part of the book. Maybe this originally existed as its own independent source. But we have a more chronological story of what happened in Judah's final days.

Jeremiah being in prison, how the people responded to the word of God, the fall of Jerusalem when the king rejects Jeremiah's message, and then what's going to happen in the aftermath of that. Jeremiah is a prophet among those that are left in the land, and then Jeremiah is a prophet in Egypt when he's taken down there by the military officers at the end of his ministry. So, that part of the book, and that part of chapters 26-45, looks fairly chronological.

But then, the last concluding chapter, chapter 45, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, an oracle that's given to Baruch, goes back to 609-587, specifically the year 605 BC. So, we've got Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, the fall of Jerusalem, the aftermath of that, and then back to the reign of Jehoiakim. This is obviously not chronology.

What's going on here? Well, again, the purpose of this is not to tell us in logical fashion or in chronological fashion, the life story of Jeremiah. I believe that the arrangement of this material highlights the recurring cycle of the people disobeying and refusing to hear the word of the Lord. Remember, Jeremiah had an incredibly long ministry.

It lasts at least something like 45-50 years. So, what I believe is going on in chapters 26-45 is that, in a sense, the ministry of Jeremiah could be divided into three basic time periods. And what's happening is that events from all three of these different time periods are being joined together, sometimes in a non-chronological way, to say the response that the people had to Jeremiah at the beginning of his ministry isn't really very different to the response that the people had at the end of his ministry.

And so, the earliest stage of Jeremiah's ministry, we can imagine that as the time before 597. The time before when the Babylonian crisis really becomes serious, the second wave of exiles is taken away, and King Jehoiachin is removed from the throne. We have events from this early stage of Jeremiah's ministry in chapters 26 and 36.

Jeremiah is warning them that you need to repent, you need to change your ways, and if you do, there is the possibility that God will relent and not send the judgment. Okay? So, in the early days of the ministry, there's a choice that Judah has that they're not going to have later in Jeremiah's ministry. They can actually repent at this point, and God may not send the judgment.

Now, after 597, when the second wave of exiles has already been taken away and the destruction of Jerusalem is looming in the future in 587 and 586, they don't have that choice anymore. The choice facing them then is going to be to surrender to the Babylonians and be destroyed. Look, you're being judged no matter what.

You can either surrender, or you can be destroyed. But in the early stages of Jeremiah's ministry, they have a legitimate opportunity to repent and avoid judgment. It's like the first visit to the potter.

There's still wet clay that can be reshaped and reformed without having to go through the devastating judgment of exile. Okay? So, that's the first stage. So, we have events depicting for us how they rejected the word of the Lord in the early stages of Jeremiah's ministry.

Particularly, King Jehoiakim did not listen to the word of God. After Jeremiah's temple sermon, he executes a prophet named Uriah. After Jeremiah's scroll is read to him, he cuts it up and throws it into the fire.

Jehoiakim did not listen to the word of God. But then, we also have events after 597, after the second wave of exile, but before 587, 586, and the destruction of Jerusalem. And we have stories from the reign of Zedekiah in 27 and 28, chapter 29, chapter 34, chapter 37 to 39 that describe for us and explain for us that Zedekiah did not listen to the word of God.

The message that Jeremiah was preaching to Zedekiah was to submit to Babylon. And if you and your military officers, if you'll submit to Babylon, if you'll surrender, then you and your officials and the people can be spared from destruction if you don't submit, then the Babylonians are going to destroy everything. And that's exactly what happens.

So, we have this summary statement in chapter 37, verses 1 and 2. Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, made king in the land of Judah, reigned instead of Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, listened to the words of the Lord that he spoke through Jeremiah the prophet. So, episodes from the earliest stage of Jeremiah's ministry, in the days of Jehoiakim, are placed directly beside episodes from Zedekiah in the second stage of Jeremiah's ministry to say, basically, Jeremiah got the same response.

And Jehoiakim and Zedekiah seemed to be kind of different people. Jehoiakim responds in anger and hostility. He never actually has a physical encounter with Jeremiah.

But his rejection of the word of the Lord is placed side by side to the rejections of Zedekiah, who is constantly asking the prophet to pray for him, who is constantly inquiring of the prophet. But you know what? It doesn't matter. Ultimately, he lacks the courage and the fear to really... or the courage and the fear of the Lord to really obey.

So, he's really no different than Jehoiakim. The third stage of Jeremiah's ministry is the time after the fall of Jerusalem in 587, going probably till sometime around 580. And initially, Jeremiah remains in the land with the people.

He's going to minister to the poor people that are there, I think in a very servant-like way, being there. When he had the option, he could have gone to Babylon. And he's going to continue to preach the word of the Lord.

And Jeremiah actually disappears from a couple of chapters here. But the message of Jeremiah is still there. And what Jeremiah is telling the people in the aftermath of exile is actually the same thing that he's telling them before the... Submit to Babylon.

Serve the Babylonians, and things will go well for you. Zedekiah had rejected that message. When Jeremiah came to him and said, Submit to Babylon, and you'll be able to save yourself and the city and the officials, the officials turned around and said, Jeremiah is a traitor.

He's encouraging treason and going over to the Babylonians. But Jeremiah was looking at this from God's perspective. Babylon was God's instrument of judgment.

They could not resist them. So, in the aftermath of exile, Jeremiah is trying to say the same thing. Look, God is using Babylon as the instrument of judgment.

That's going to last for about 70 years. And then God's going to deal with Babylon. But in that time, you need to submit to Babylon.

And the people in the aftermath of exile are going to respond to that message of submit to Babylon in exactly the way that Zedekiah did. They're not going to listen to what the prophet has to say. And Ishmael, this renegade from the family of David, is going to murder Gedaliah, the governor that the Babylonians have appointed.

And he's not going to listen to the prophet's message, submit to Babylon. Okay, you would think after all the things that the people of Judah have experienced in the life and ministry of Jeremiah, after he's been preaching to them for more than 20 years, that judgment is going to fall, the city is going to be destroyed, after that happens, you think they would listen. You think they would respond to what the prophet had to say.

But they are continuing to not listen to the word of God. So, after Ishmael assassinates Gedaliah and he flees, there's another group that comes to Jeremiah. There's a group of officers led by a man named Johanan who rescues some Jewish refugees from Ishmael, who's trying to run away as this renegade.

And they come to Jeremiah, and they say, Jeremiah, we want you to pray for us. This is interesting because before the fall of Jerusalem, God had prohibited the prophet from praying for the people, and Jeremiah says, yeah, I'll gladly pray for you. The time of judgment is over.

But they have the opportunity now for the prophet to pray for them and for the prophet to give them direction. And Jeremiah says, look, I'll give you the word from the Lord. Give me 10 days.

And he prays, and he seeks God's face. Jeremiah comes back to Johanan in chapters 42 and 43, and he says, look, here's God's word to you. Submit to Babylon.

Do not fear them. Serve the Lord by submitting to Babylon. You see, Johanan and his men wanted to flee to Egypt because they felt that was the way to escape reprisals from the Babylonians for the death of Gedaliah.

Jeremiah says, no, that's not what God wants you to do. Stay in the land. Submit to Babylon.

I mean, have we heard Jeremiah say that to anyone before? He said it to Zedekiah. He said it to Ishmael and to the people and they didn't listen. He says that to Johanan and this military group that wants to go down to Egypt.

And in chapter 43, verse 7, it says, they entered into Egypt in disobedience to the word of the Lord. And it seems that they kidnapped Jeremiah and took him along. So, the purpose of this section is not to give us a day-by-day account of the ministry of Jeremiah.

It's not even necessary to lay that out in a strict chronology. What it's designed to do is to say from the very beginning of Jeremiah's ministry until the very end of Jeremiah's ministry, there's been one thing that has characterized that. Refusal to listen to the word of God.

And I think, in a sense, the fact that this is not laid out in a chronological way makes that point more effective. It's like, are we ever going to get past this cycle where the people will stop rebelling against the word of the Lord and listen to what God says? Now, in the stories that are told in this particular part of the book of Jeremiah, the people's disobedience to God, remember the charge, they did not listen to the word of the Lord, that disobedience is often going to be reflected in various forms of persecution that are going to be inflicted on the prophet Jeremiah. So, we don't just have stories in Jeremiah 26-45 of Jeremiah preaching the word and the people not listening.

We have stories in Jeremiah where Jeremiah preaches the word of the Lord, but the people don't listen, and then they're going to take out that unbelief on the prophet himself. We've mentioned, as we're working through the book, various ways that Jeremiah comes to represent and embody the word of God, not just in his words, but I think in his very life. In a sense, he anticipates Jesus as the incarnate word of God because, as the prophet, he is a living representation of God's word.

What that means is, is that when the people do not accept the word of God, the way that they're often going to respond to that message is by abusing the prophet. So, this is another way where I think we really see Jeremiah, and he is a scroll. His life is a message given to the people, and in the same way that Jehoiakim cut up the scrolls of his prophecies, the people are going to try to cut up the living scroll because they don't want to hear and accept what he has to say.

The persecution of Jeremiah in the book actually begins all the way back in chapter 11, verses 18 to 23. And remember, that's where Jeremiah prays his first lament. And in that particular passage, it's the men of Anathoth who are conspiring to put Jeremiah to death and Jeremiah is praying for God to avenge himself on his enemies.

Okay, here's the starting point. And we might get an idea here of what things are going to be like in the days ahead for Jeremiah. The people in his own hometown, in this small, tiny village, are the ones who initially want to put Jeremiah to death.

A prophet is not without honor except in his own hometown and Jeremiah is going to experience that in his own life. Jesus went through this as well. But right away, there's opposition.

In the call of Jeremiah, Jeremiah had learned from God, I'm going to make you like a bronze wall. I'm going to make you like a fortified city. That should have informed him right away.

This is not going to be easy. So, the first form of persecution is in chapter 11. In chapter 20, after the sign act where Jeremiah smashes the pot, chapter 20 verses 1-6, a priest by the name of Pasher has Jeremiah beaten and put in the stocks.

Alright, that's really just the prelude to various types of opposition that Jeremiah is going to experience in chapters 26-45. So, as you're reading these stories, you're going to find Jeremiah is going through all kinds of things where physically he is either threatened or abused because his life represents the word of God, and the people hate that message; they don't want to accept it. They're going to reflect that in their treatment of the prophet.

Okay, here are some examples: a quick overview and a quick survey. In Chapter 26, Jeremiah preaches the temple sermon.

I believe we have here an alternate version of the message that he preached in chapter 7. The immediate response of both the leaders and the people was that this man should die because he had prophesied against God's house. Chapters 27 and 28, Jeremiah is preaching about the subjugation of Jerusalem, and he's wearing the wooden yoke symbolizing the bondage of the people to Babylon. He is immediately opposed by Hananiah, who comes and breaks the yoke and says within two years, the Babylonian crisis is going to be over.

Jeremiah is going to be countered and opposed by Hananiah. In chapter 29, even though he's not even living there, Jeremiah is opposed by the false prophets who are living in Babylon. And we have in chapters 27-29 this sort of literary thing going on where we have what I call prophetic mirroring.

Hananiah imitates the example of Jeremiah. He speaks in the name of the Lord. Jeremiah speaks in the name of the Lord.

Jeremiah performs the sign act with the yoke. Hananiah performs the sign act with the yoke. Well, we have the same thing going on in chapter 29.

Jeremiah sends a letter to the exiles telling them that they're going to have to settle down and live in Babylon because God has determined that the exile is going to last for 70 years. We have a false prophet by the name of Shemaiah who writes a letter back in the other direction saying that Jeremiah needs to be put in prison and censured. So, there's another act of prophetic mirroring.

Jeremiah writes a letter. Shemaiah writes a letter. So, there's going to be all kinds of opposition.

Chapter 32. Jeremiah is in prison in the last days and various forms of imprisonment. And sometimes, how does all of this chronologically fit together? One writer said we weave from one prison to the other, one location to another.

And we don't always know exactly where these places are or how they fit together. Prisons provide the backdrop for much of Jeremiah's ministry. Chapter 36.

Jeremiah's scroll is read at the temple. Jeremiah has to go into hiding. Baruch has to go into hiding.

When they take the scroll and read it to Jehoiakim and Jehoiakim takes a knife, he cuts it up, the scroll, piece by piece, throws it into the fire. If Jehoiakim had been able to get his hands on Jeremiah, he would have done the same thing to him. Chapter 37.

Jeremiah is put in prison because he's accused of being ready to desert over to the Babylonians. Hey, we know what you're going to do. You're going to run over to the other side.

We'll put you in prison to make sure that doesn't happen. You kind of wonder, why didn't they just let him go? Chapter 38. Jeremiah is thrown into a cistern by military officers and they leave him there to die.

Zedekiah goes along with this because they're accusing Jeremiah of being a traitor who is weakening the war effort. After a foreigner by the name of Avid-Melech convinces the king to get Jeremiah out of the cistern, they put him back in prison. Jeremiah is in prison until the capture of the city and it's the Babylonians who release and let him go.

But then finally in chapter 43, after he tells Johanan and the military officers don't go down to Egypt, they take him by force against his will with them and he's going to finish the rest of his ministry in exile as a refugee in Egypt. Wow. Jeremiah encounters and experiences all of those kinds of things.

Again, the purpose here is not biography. The purpose is not to say, let me tell you a story about the guy who went through the worst suffering you can possibly imagine. The story is to say, look at the hostility that Jeremiah encountered as he preached the word of God.

Again and again, the recurring type scene is God is going to confront the people with a message from the prophet. God is going to go to the king with a message from the prophet. God is going to go to military officers with a message from the prophet.

And again and again and again he experiences some form of persecution or opposition. Alright, so we've stressed that the structure and the design of this section of the book is not chronological. There are parts that are, 37 to 44, but overall the structure is not chronological.

But I want to just give you one possible suggestion here I think there is a possible structure that does give some order and design. And in fact, the structure is put in place as a way of helping us to interpret the life of Jeremiah. In the same way that we have these prose sermons in Jeremiah 1 to 25 that are sort of signposts that summarize the message of Jeremiah, I believe there are structural passages that are sort of an interpretive grid for us as we're reading these different stories about the life and ministry of Jeremiah.

And these stories that provide sort of this interpretive grid are what I refer to as the Jehoiakim framework. Okay? The Jehoiakim framework. Let me explain what that means.

As I read through these stories and all these different accounts and episodes from Jeremiah's life, I noticed that there are only four chapters that specifically deal with events from the reign of King Jehoiakim. Alright, remember who he is? He's Jeremiah's prime antagonist. They really do not like each other.

And Jehoiakim represents, I think, maybe the most serious antagonism to the Word of God. He puts to death the prophet Uriah, chapter 26. He cuts up the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies.

He demands the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch. I mean, they're enemies. So, what I believe is going on is that these four stories about or episodes or messages from the time of Jehoiakim provide a frame around chapters 26 to 45.

Here's where these stories are found. There is a story that is relayed from the time of Jehoiakim, chapter 26, verse 1. There is another passage in chapter 35, verse 1, that is given a heading dated to early in the reign of Jehoiakim. Same expression that's in 26.1. There is another Jehoiakim episode in chapter 36, verse 1 in the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

And then finally, in chapter 45, at the very end of this section, again, 45.1, an oracle from the fourth year of Jehoiakim. And so, obviously, we see there's a Jehoiakim story, chapter 26, at the beginning. There's a Jehoiakim oracle in chapter 45 at the end.

And then there's one in 35 and 36. So I believe what we have going on here is that in the midst of something that looks kind of disorderly to us and out of order, this frame divides Jeremiah 26-45 into two sections or panels that are designed to both parallel and contrast with each other. We have one panel in chapter 26 that ends in chapter 35.

We have a second panel that begins in chapter 36 and chapter 45. Now, as English writers and as English composers, if we were writing a story about Jeremiah's life, you know, we wouldn't structure the story this way. But in an oral culture, where often these stories were read or told orally, perhaps what we have going on here is a form of parallelism where chapters 26-35 are going to parallel each other.

There are similarities between this section and the second section in chapters 36-45. Additionally, there are also some contrasts in chapters 26-35 that are going to be important when we compare it to 36-45. We take a story, and we plow from the beginning to the end.

What I think Hebrew narrative often does is tell the story in panels and uses narrative parallelism and repetition. I believe we're going to see some forms of that as we look at this particular section of the book. Okay, what does this Jehoiakim framework do for our understanding of the message of 26-45? Well, I think it conveys a couple of important things.

Number one, it reminds us that the time of Jehoiakim's reign was a decisive moment in Judah's history. When this man rejects the word of the Lord after the temple sermon, when this king, who is the leader of God's people, cuts up the scroll of Jeremiah, that is a decisive act of rebellion against the Lord. In a sense, we view this as a watershed moment.

The closing down of the opportunities to repent in many ways Jehoiakim's life and his reign is the time when Judah moves from possible repentance to irrevocable judgment. Okay, now also remember that in chapter 36 and chapter 45, there is a

specific time in Jehoiakim's reign. 605 is the year that the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish.

It was also the year that the first wave of the exiles were taken back to Babylon. This is a decisive moment. And so, I believe the Jehoiakim framework is partly here to remind us when was this time when Judah passed from possible repentance to irrevocable and inevitable judgment I think the reign of Jehoiakim, when he formally rebels against the Word of God as it was preached in the Temple Sermon and then as it was written in the scrolls, that's a decisive moment.

Okay, now, to add to the significance of this, and I think to further validate how the writer is portraying this as a critical moment, listen to chapter 25, verse 1, which, remember, concludes the first major section of the book. And it says in 25.1, the Word that came to Jeremiah concerning all of the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah. So, the concluding message that wraps up all of the judgment stuff that we see in chapters 1 to 25, when did it happen? The fourth year of Jehoiakim.

And in that passage, God announces how he's sending the Babylonians and how there's going to be 70 years of exile. This is the first year where the exiles are going to be taken away, and Jeremiah is laying out in the fourth year of Jehoiakim this is what's going to follow. This is a decisive moment in Judah's history.

So, the fourth year of Jehoiakim closes the first section of the book, chapter 25, and introduces the second section of the book, chapter 26. It concludes the second section of the book, chapter 45, and then listen to what it says in chapter 46, verse 1 in the third section of the book that introduces the oracles against the nations. I bet you can't possibly imagine what time period is going to be mentioned in 46.1. But here's the third section.

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, the prophet, concerning the nations. And it says about Egypt concerning the army of Pharaoh Necho the king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates at Carchemish, and which Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah. So, I believe that the Jehoiakim framework takes these stories from various periods of Jeremiah's ministry and life, and it puts a frame around them to say, think about Jehoiakim's life and Jehoiakim's reign when he was the king, and when he rejected the word of the Lord that cast the dye for the people of Judah in a sense.

That was the last straw. And there had been other last straws in the past. Micah had announced the judgment, and God relented when Hezekiah repented.

Manasseh did more evil than all the kings that came before him. I'm going to wipe Jerusalem like a dish. God relented through the reforms of Josiah.

But with Jehoiakim, there's a final rejection of God. There's God's final rejection, the final rejection of God's word, and the dye is cast, and judgment is going to happen. I think the Jehoiakim framework makes that point. Alright, now there's a second thing that the Jehoiakim framework does for us as we look at these two sections.

Remember, it divides 26-45 into chapters 26-35 and then 36-45. So, let's look at the first panel. There's a movement here.

In chapter 26, verse 3, at the beginning of panel 1, the reason that Jeremiah is going to preach his temple sermon here is it may be that they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way that I may relent of the disaster that I intended to do to them. There is the possibility, *ulai*, maybe they will listen and I can relent. So, there is the possibility in 26 that all of the judgments that are going to be carried out against Judah, if the people will listen, then maybe God will relent from sending the judgment.

Okay? So, what happens is, with all of these examples of how they did not listen, they obviously missed the opportunity. And in chapter 35, we come to the end of panel 1 and here's what it says. Verse 15 to verse 17.

I have sent you all of my servants the prophets, sending them persistently saying, turn now every one of you from his evil way and amend your deeds and do not go after the other gods and serve them. Remember, that's what he's saying in 26. Change your ways, and maybe you can be spared from judgment.

Verse 17, though, here's their response. Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I am bringing upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them because I have spoken to them, and they have not listened. Shammah.

They didn't obey. I have called them, and they have not answered. So, what happens in panel 1 of the Jeremiah narratives in 26 to 35? What happens in this first panel? They have an opportunity to hear, but in the end, they have not listened, and God is going to judge them.

Okay? That same movement is going to be reflected in the second panel in chapters 36 to 45. Okay? So, let's go to the second panel. It's introduced by this statement.

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the writing out of the scroll, okay, why is Jeremiah going to do this? Verse 3. It may be, perhaps, it may be that the house of Judah will hear all of the disaster that I intend to do them so that everyone may turn from his evil way and that I may forgive their iniquity and sin.

So, it's four years later from chapter 26; maybe they'll relent, maybe they'll turn away, and I won't have to send the judgment. There is the possibility at the beginning of the second panel of being spared from judgment.

Okay. How does that work out? Well, we go to chapter 44, verses 16 to 18, at the end of the second panel. Are the people going to listen to the word of God? Here's the response of the Jewish refugees that are in Egypt, and you remember what they say.

Verse 16. As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you. But we will do everything that we have vowed, making our offerings to these pagan gods.

Hey, we're not going to listen to you, Jeremiah. So, the same movement that we have in the first panel is reflected in the second. It begins with the possibility of repentance and being spared from judgment.

It ends with the people not listening to the word of God and experiencing national doom. So, the Lord says at the end of chapter 44 I have sworn by my great name, says the Lord, that my name will no longer be invoked by the people of Judah. And I'm going to bring absolute destruction on these refugees that are living in Egypt.

Only a handful of them will ever return to the land. Okay. So, what we have going on here, the Jehoiakim framework does a couple of things.

Number one, it shows us the time of Jehoiakim. That was a turning point. It was a watershed moment.

Number two, it also does the same thing that we've seen in the first half of the book of Jeremiah. There was an opportunity to repent and to be spared, and we see the closing down of that, chapters 26 to 35. We see the closing down of that again in 36 to 45.

And by not doing this in a strictly chronological way, but by laying it out in parallel panels, we get to see the repetitiousness of this. It's just like in chapters 1 to 25. Remember what happens there.

It begins with repeated and recurring calls to return to the Lord. Those return calls gradually diminish and disappear. And in the midst of this, there are the two visits to the potter.

You can still change. You can still revise. You're still wet clay in the hand of God.

Second visit to the potter, you're a fixed vessel that is going to be smashed. All throughout the book, there is the closing down of the opportunities to repent. And so the Jehoiakim framework helps us to see that.

Finally, there's one last thing in the Jehoiakim framework. In the first section in chapters 26 to 35, we have the promise of restoration in chapters 30 to 33, referred to as the book of consolation. We've been focusing so much on judgment we haven't really talked about that.

But in the midst of all this national disobedience, there are also the promises of restoration. And in light of the disobedience that comes before it and the disobedience that comes after it, it's a pretty significant thing. So, this is what God is planning to do in the aftermath of exile when he restores his people.

There is a very interesting contrast, however, between that and what we see in the second panel in chapters 40 to 43, where in the aftermath of exile, there is more disobedience, more judgment, and more wrath from God because the people have not listened. There is going to be a restoration, but it's not going to appear in the near future. It's not going to take place during the life and times of Jeremiah.

It's going to be something in the distant future, but God will bring his people back. Jeremiah, chapters 26 to 45, we have stories and very good ones, very interesting ones, about Jeremiah preaching the word of God and the reaction and the response to that. From all different time periods in Jeremiah's ministry, there's hostility, there's rejection, there's indifference, there's persecution of the prophet, and ultimately, the rejection of the word of God is why the judgment of Judah is ultimately to come.

Practical application of this, I am reminded from the stories in Jeremiah's life how we respond to God's word, the most important choice and decision we'll ever make. Listening to God's word is a matter of life and death. The book of Jeremiah is about the word of the Lord.

It has the power to bring death, but also the power to bring life, but ultimately, it depends on our response. And I hope as we study through this that the negative ways that Judah responded to Jeremiah's message and to the word of the Lord will be a reminder to us that finding real life comes from listening to God and responding in obedience to his word and the message that he's conveyed to us in his written word in the same way that he spoke to the people in Jeremiah's day through the prophet and through his spoken word.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his instruction on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 19, chapters 26 through 45, A Structural Overview.